

Vincentian Servant-Leadership Prayers



(Adapted from the Leadership Prayers by Richard Kriegbaum)



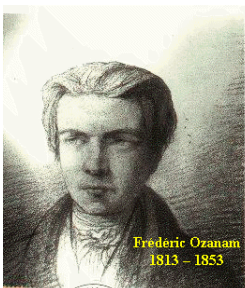
LISTENING As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader: The more change an organization experiences the more it needs effective communication, especially to and from the leader. The Vincentian servant leader cultivates a deep commitment to listening intently to others and seeks to identify the will of the group and helps to clarify that will in the context of the Vincentian value structure and the Rule. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- It seems like nothing happens silently among us, God; everything requires words. There are so many words for every event, every dream, every meeting, every relationship, every plan, and especially every change. In fact, my leading seems to be mostly words: the words that I hear or read and the words that I speak and write.
- To do things differently, we need ideas, and the ideas need just the right words. Good words clarify, strengthen, and encourage us. The wrong words confuse us and leave us weakened and discouraged. Oh, Lord, give each of us the good words and the good listening we need to be a great organization.
- You are such a listener, God! Help me listen to your Spirit so I will be able to listen to the unspoken messages people bring to me. I want to listen the way you do. Make me genuinely accessible. People come with their words, but they hope I will hear their hearts.
- Whether they speak or write, teach me how to be truly quiet inside and actively listen. I do not want to disrespect them by interrupting or pretending to listen, while I secretly ignore them, so I can think about what I am going to say. I want to really listen, and understand their hearts. Help me open my mind and heart. I cannot lead well if I cannot listen well.

Together:



I want my words for others to be your words for me. I need your Spirit to shape my thoughts so that when I express who am as a leader, I will be your servant doing your work with your words. Speak to me, and speak through me. Let me listen to the words of their spirits. And let me speak words from your Spirit. Amen

EMPATHY As a Vincentian Servant Leader



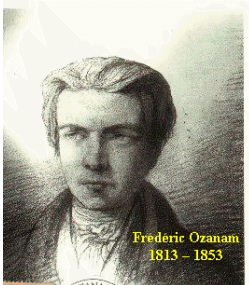
Leader: The Vincentian servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others, accepting and recognizing their special and unique spirits and gifts. The servant leader assumes the good intentions of colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when they may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. They are empathetic listeners, grounded in Vincentian spirituality. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- O God, because you love me so strongly, I want to become everything you had in mind when you made me. I want to be the best possible leader, who helps everyone in the Society experience the thrill of making a key contribution to a great success. God, I know you want these same experiences for every one of us.
- I trust your consoling compassion for all my shortcomings, incapacities, and broken dreams. I feel secure with you even when I do not act as you want me to and when I fail to lead or fail to lead at all. God, I know you want everyone in the organization to feel the same kind of security, but compassion and empathy has a high price in our competitive environment.
- Lord, I am called to lead a whole Region of the Society forward, but I am also responsible for the welfare of each person along the way. The Society exists to help build great people by serving those who are poor. For so many of us to labor together and serve so many, we need fair policies that express your compassion.
- Yet sometimes what seems wise policy for everyone in general also seems to hurt someone in particular. Lord, I cannot always discern the genuine problems that we should try to alleviate from the imagined or even fraudulent ones. I need your light to ensure that in attempting to show compassion I am not simply being gullible.

Together:

Give me the right sense of empathy. I need keen judgment to balance the needs of each individual with the needs of the organization and those we exist to serve. Help me to remember that with you mercy always triumphs over judgment. Help me to mirror your compassion, both in policies and in exceptions. Give me the courage to lead with wise empathy. Amen



HEALING As a Vincentian Servant Leader



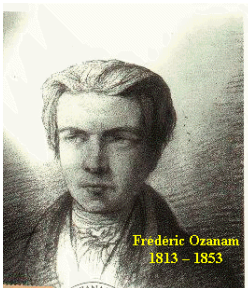
Leader: The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of Vincentian servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Vincentian servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity *to help make whole* those with whom they come in contact. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- There is so much pain in this world, God. So much loss of health, energy, love, opportunity, happiness, security, and due reward. These wounds are very real. So many of us are working wounded every day; it is a miracle that we accomplish so much. Touch us, Father. Console us. Heal us.
- God, the Society is perpetually on the road to the future: relocating, reorganizing, revising, restructuring, retooling, reinventing. And all this change results in an endless string of bruises, dislocations, cuts, strains, and breaks. No matter how I do it, and no matter how necessary it is, every change hurts someone. Comfort me, Father, so your healing can flow to those I lead.
- We try to function like a family, but when family members hurt each other, it is worse than if we did not care about each other at all. Our caring for each other binds us together, but the pain is all the more intense when feelings are hurt and relationships are severed. We need your healing.
- We try to work like a body, and we all feel pain whenever one of us has a problem. It doesn't seem to matter what the problem is; the pain spreads to others. I feel for those who hurt, but for the good of everyone, we need to keep going. Heal us.

Together:

O God, have mercy on all the hurts and fears among us, including the pain we have inflicted on ourselves. Help me to realize that change often wounds people, and as the leader who champions those changes I have a unique reason to stay close to the wounded. Give me the grace to heal those who especially suffer from broken spirits and emotional hurts. Amen





AWARENESS As a Vincentian Servant Leader

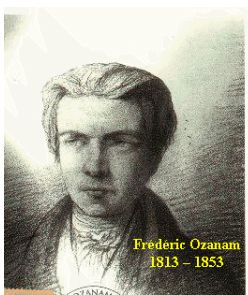
Leader: Awareness, and especially self-awareness supported by prayer and reflection, strengthens the Vincentian servant-leader to be able to view most situations from a more spiritually grounded and integrated, holistic position. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- When I am following you, God, I feel a bit lost most of the time. But that makes sense. I am not leading you. You are leading me.
- If I want complete certainty, I cannot expect to be led by your Spirit. I cannot know what will happen next, nor demand control. And I know that following you is the only way I can make a great and beautiful difference in the world.
- I cannot control what happens outside, but by your grace I can increasingly know myself. Help me to master who I am and how I give meaning to actions and events around me. I know when I am listening to you because your Spirit makes me aware, encourages me, points to the truth, lets me decide, and holds me accountable.
- Somehow, God, you always make it work out. You provide the necessary resources: wisdom, strength, time, helpers, money, skills, and all the unanticipated things that I never could have planned for anyway. More wonderfully, you redeem my mistakes.
- I have done all the analyzing, conferring, thinking, planning, double-checking, and praying that I have time for. There is never enough information, and there are always conflicting opinions and priorities. I cannot sort it all out, but this is what seems best.

Together:

Give me your grace of awareness, so that I can understand issues involving ethics, values and the tensions within the Society. Is there anything else you want to tell me? It is time to act. I hope this is right for everyone involved. Now it is all up to you. I am not sure what to do, God, but here I go. Please make it all work out right. Amen



PERSUASION As a Vincentian Servant Leader



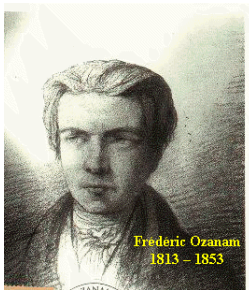
Leader: If the mission really matters, the only leader worth following is a strong leader. Vincentian servant leaders rely on persuasion rather than on one's positional authority. Persuasion, listening and awareness support the servant leader in the decision making processes, and helps them to build consensus within groups. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- A strong leader is the only kind of leader I want to follow, God, especially with a mission as important as ours. And it is the kind of leader I want to be. I don't want to be the boss; I want to be the leader.
- I am not asking for the power to make people do what I want. I need some sort of authority, but I don't care if you give me formal, positional authority or informal, personal authority. I simply want to be the person who exercises decisive influence on the values and directions of the whole group, the one who holds them together and keeps them healthy and on task. I want to be the one they willing go all the way with.
- A weak leader is not really a leader at all, Lord. If you want me to lead, I have to be strong, and you will have to do it. I know you can. Nothing is impossible for you. So I am saying to you plainly that if you grant a miracle of your strength in me and a miracle of your protection on my efforts, then I can be the strong leader we need. Otherwise I cannot be the leader at all because we do not need a weak leader.
- We need a leader with great influence, someone almost everyone trusts, some one who can enable us to get the job done. Only your strength can do this in me, and only your grace can move them to accept me as the leader.

Together:

I am willing to lead with your strength, Lord. I have learned to follow well, so people can trust me to lead with a follower's heart. When I step out in leadership actions, either I will be persuasive and effective or I won't. If your strength can flow through me and make others feel strong when I lead, then you will have shown us again that...Your strength makes everything possible, God. Make me a strong leader. Amen





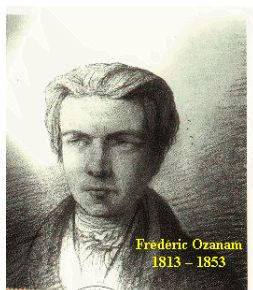
CONCEPTUALIZATION As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader: Effective leaders encourage creativity by modeling it personally and by protecting and rewarding it in others. Vincentian servant-leaders seek to nurture their ability to inspire Councils and Conferences to *dream great dreams*. The ability to look at a problem or an opportunity from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- I have trapped myself in a box that I can't even recognize, Lord. You are the one who sets prisoners free. Release me. I am ready to leave the box of my normal thinking, willing to destroy it in the process, if that is what it takes. I must find the opportunity that lies disguised in this challenge. Show me the truth that will set me free.
- I am a prisoner of my old ways of thinking. My assumptions blind me to new possibilities that you have for me. What I think I know keeps me from knowing what I cannot yet think. I see people's weaknesses; you see the strengths you gave them. I see what they have done so far; you see what they could do. I see why we can't do it; you see how we can.
- I see the problem; you see the solution. Break me out. Do you need to move me to a new place for a different view? Am I protecting something or someone? Am I protecting myself? What am I afraid of in this situation? Have I surrounded myself with people who think too much alike? Too much like me?
- You created this universe from nothing, lacing all of its expanding and self-renewing intricacies together in absolute perfection. You are the Father of all creativity. I want to be creative like you, Father. I want to think new thoughts and bring them into existence. I love to create solutions for the messes people get into.

Together:



Give me the creative freedom of your Spirit. Give me a new song to sing, a new story to write. I tried to be creative, and I worked myself into this dungeon. Send your Spirit of freedom and break me out. Amen



FORESIGHT As a Vincentian Servant Leader

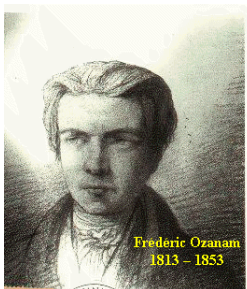
Leader: Vincentian foresight is a characteristic cultivated through prayer and study that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from our rich heritage, applied to the present and the future. Unless we are sure of our starting point, we can never chart a correct course to our goal. There is no alternative to the freedom and power of the truth. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- O God, help us to agree on what is true about who we are and where we are, so that we may agree on where to go and the best way to get there. Though we will not all look at our reality in the same way, help us to see the same reality and agree on its meaning for us, whether or not we like what we see. Other wise, God, we will waste precious time and energy arguing from different assumptions.
- Obviously, God, you love variety! You made us so diverse that all we can do is laugh and wonder. That in itself is part of the reality we must understand. We each have our own reactions and feelings about everything. This wonderful range of perspectives helps us to excel, as long as you help us to respect each other.
- On my own it is not at all clear to me what is true, God. I wish I could explain it all logically or factually for everyone. This one I just know somehow, without all the normal rational processes. With foresight, I see the beginning and the end without the middle. I feel in my gut, and I think it is right, but the part of me that loves data and logic always complains. So will all the logical people around me, God, and who can blame them?
- Somehow, God, in all our differences, and despite all the erratic information, give us a shared reality, a similar idea of how things truly are for us. Lead my spirit to the truth about our situation, so that I can describe it in a way that leads to consensus.
- Some of us cannot see the truth because we fear it. Some of us invested heavily in another view of reality, and we may feel shamed if it turns out we were wrong. Some of us actually worked to build a different reality and do not want it to change.

Together:

I know that the truth tends to win in the long run, but I need to see it early enough to act wisely. Help us to understand our situation accurately so that we do not waste this opportunity for greatness. We want the truth because only the truth can free us to achieve our mission. Show us what is real, God. We have to know the truth. Amen





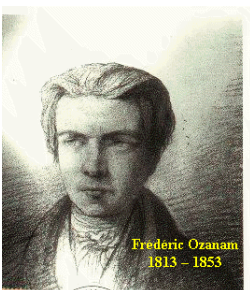
STEWARDSHIP As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader: Vincentian stewardship assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It is a commitment to balancing the passion for charity with the need to sustain the ministry of the Society and demands the stewardship of our time, talent and treasure. The budget declares the operative values and priorities of the organization. It also declares our investment in future directions. The budget is a leadership plan, and budgeting is a leadership process. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- We are your money managers, Lord. We are stewards, doing our best to bring in as much money as we can and use it as shrewdly as we can. We never get it exactly right, but help us come close enough for an orderly operation and a good harvest.
- The budget affects every person and every program, so getting it right is extremely important. Every budget line is someone's sincere request, wrapped in our mission and tied with their hopes. But God, somehow this budget has to give us both a present and a future.
- Stewardship roots us a strong present so that we will have a platform to reach the future. If I don't manage our time, talent and treasure well, I won't have anything to lead with. It is so hard to choose between what to do now and what to try later. What powerful tyranny the urgencies of the present have!
- We must put the money where we say our true values are, but what is the right balance? After we care for all the current requirements, how will we pay for our future? If we make a stingy investment in our future, we can expect a stingy harvest. Yet if the budget puts too much into preparing for our future, we will starve our changes for excellence now.

Together:



Oh, Lord, give us wisdom and courage! I know you have a bright future for us, but we will miss some of it if our stewardship does not help take us where you want us. Help me shape this budget into a wise leadership plan for an exciting future. Everyone needs all your money for right now, Lord. Help us invest in our future. Amen.



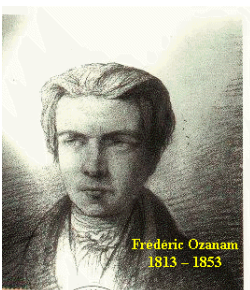
COMMITMENT TO THE GROWTH OF PEOPLE As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader: Vincentian servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as volunteers or paid staff. As such, the servant-leader is deeply committed to the spiritual growth of each and every individual within his or her Region, Council and Conference, and so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- I know only so much, God, and I can do only so much. If the Society is limited to my abilities alone, we will fall short of our potential together and miss your vision for us.
- Help me identify other leaders for this effort. Enable me to see what each one can do best, show me how to recruit them, and point me to the right responsibility for the right person. And when I delegate, please give me the courage to release control and follow.
- Sometimes I feel that leading is mostly about following, about deciding who is the best person to follow in some particular area. I depend on you to sharpen my intuition and sensitivity so I will choose the right people and help them to grow in Vincentian spirituality.
- How ironic, God, that the longer and better I lead, the more I depend on the skills and expertise of others. Someone else is better than I am at every task that needs to be done. They lead me in their areas. I must trust our success to them, so I must trust you to guide my selection of them.
- My leadership will either enhance or restrain the work of your Spirit in those who lead with me, making them more or less effective. Give me the grace to I choose to follow those who will have a profound impact on the results in the Society, and may they have a profound impact on me.

Together:



O God, help me to be committed to the growth of those who you have put in my path. Teach me how the highest form of delegating is to lay the leadership mantle on key people for particular goals and then follow their lead. Point me toward them, and make them greater leaders than I am. I cannot do this alone, God. Show me the leaders I should follow.
Amen



BUILDING COMMUNITY As a Vincentian Servant Leader

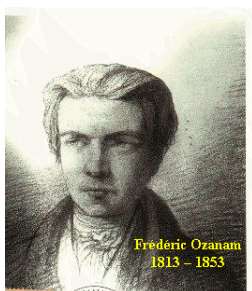
Leader: Servant leadership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is focused on building and sustaining a community of individuals formed in a Mission and Rule. Values control behavior. We act on the basis of what we believe really matters, what is right and good. Whoever influences the Core Values in a group is, in fact, the leader. The process must begin with the values God instills in the leader, and so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- I realize I cannot control everything, God, even through endless rules, regulations, and directives. I do not want an immobilized democracy in which everyone votes on every little thing. Nor do I want a demoralized dictatorship where I have to decide everything and think up everything. I want a true community with strong relationships and effective actions guided by commitment to our mission.
- Our Core Values make us a faith community in which achieving our mission is our means of becoming better people and a better organization. These values move us toward the right goals. If we do not live our core values, nothing else will work right.
- Your call to leadership always includes your provision of what I need to lead. By your grace I can do a lot of things to keep the Core Values before us and to model them myself, but only your Spirit can plant them deep and strong in everyone's heart. Make me a spiritual leader, a nexus in the dynamic relationship of your Spirit and the spirit of the members.
- I know the odds are against this working. It feels safer to try to tell everyone what to do instead of trusting them to act on their own in concert with our core values. But help me to respect them as individuals you created them to be so they can grow and be truly great for your glory.
- I want to be a spiritually sensitive leader, to enable people to sense more clearly and powerfully the call and guidance of your Spirit in their lives. I know this kind of leadership is rare because it is a matter of the spirit, but, God, that is the kind of leader I want to be.

Together:

As the leader, I am responsible for the mission and values we all live by. It must begin within me. Give me a healthy and strong spirit, for there is no going back. I feel a deep longing for the future. Help us to live the Core Values that will take us there. I want it, God; I ache for it—for how things *could* be. Infuse the Core Values in our hearts, God. Start with me. Amen



Beatitudes of a Vincentian Servant Leader



O God, give us the blessing and grace to be Vincentian Servant Leader:

Blessed are the leaders who have not sought the high places, but who have been drafted into service because of their ability and willingness to serve.

Blessed are the leaders who know where they are going, why they are going, and how to get there.

Blessed are the leaders who know no discouragement, who present no alibi.

Blessed are the leaders who know how to lead without being dictatorial, because true leaders are humble.

Blessed are the leaders who seek the best for those they serve.

Blessed are the leaders who develop new leaders.

Blessed are the leaders who march with the group, interpreting correctly the signs on the pathway that leads to success.

Blessed are the leaders who have their head in the clouds but their feet on the ground.

Blessed are the leaders who consider leadership an opportunity for service.

For this we pray. Amen

